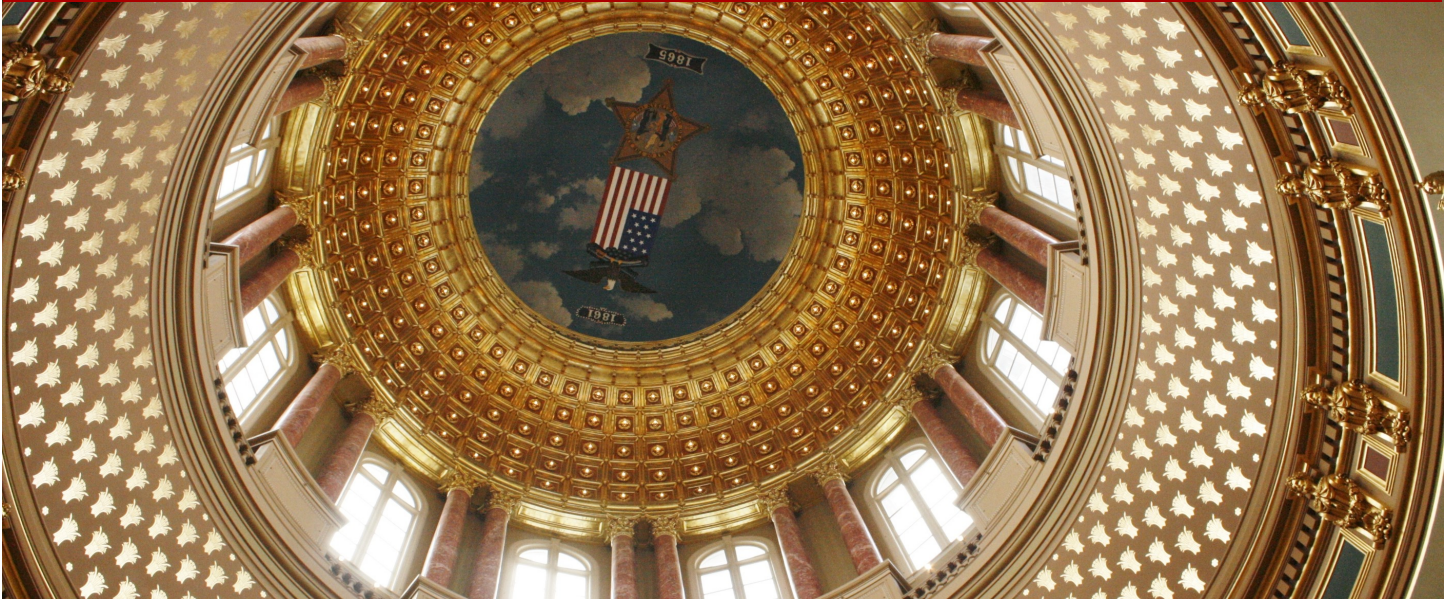


House Republican Caucus Newsletter



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Appropriations

(Contact: Brad Trow at 1-3471)

House Republicans Release FY 2020 Budget Targets

Development of the state budget took a major step forward on Tuesday when House Republicans unveiled their framework for a responsible, conservative budget in Fiscal Year 2020. The House proposal provides \$7.668 billion from the General Fund to state programs beginning July 1, 2019.

The House budget plan spends just 97.45 percent of the General Fund's on-going revenue, which is projected to be \$7.8684 billion in 2020 according to the state's Revenue Estimating Conference. The \$7.6680 billion budget plan represents a 0.63 percent increase over the current year's budget, including the Governor's supplemental funding proposal. This is below the REC's projected revenue growth level for FY 2020 of 1.8 percent.

The House Republican plan allows for the state to address a number of priorities that Iowans have brought to their elected representatives. These include address-

ing Medicaid reimbursements to nursing homes and rural hospitals and providing additional resources for mental health services to children and adults. Additional resources can also be committed to worker training, through the Future Ready Iowa program and the assistance provided to Iowa's higher education institutions.

The House Republican framework funds the commitment made to Iowa's public school system with the adoption of the 2.06% increase to state school aid and increases for school transportation costs. The budget design also allows for new resources to be used for Iowa's public safety, corrections, and judicial systems. This is all done while ensuring that state spending is less than what Iowa is projected to collect in tax revenue for the year.

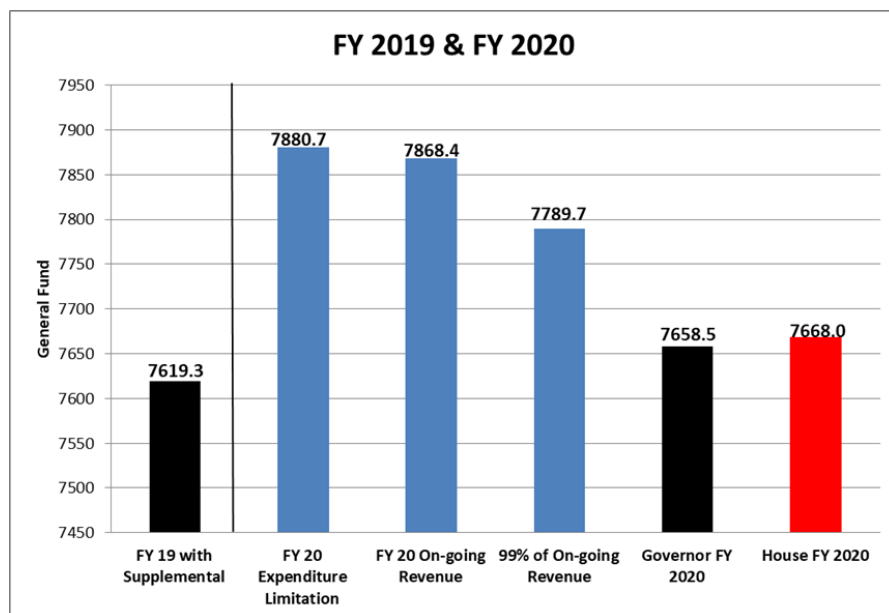
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HOUSE TARGETS	FY 2019 Adjusted	FY 2020 House	Diff from FY 2019
Administration & Regulation	\$48,466,893	\$52,420,985	\$3,954,092
Ag & Natural Resources	\$39,357,522	\$41,107,522	\$1,750,000
Economic Development	\$40,216,345	\$41,028,345	\$812,000
Education	\$912,675,487	\$961,044,271	\$48,368,784
Health & Human Services	\$1,962,894,820	\$1,941,888,698	-\$21,006,122
Justice Systems	\$751,532,636	\$770,370,901	\$18,838,265
State Aid to Schools & other standing appropriations	\$3,864,188,258	\$3,860,115,038	-\$4,073,220
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$7,619,331,961	\$7,667,975,760	\$48,643,799

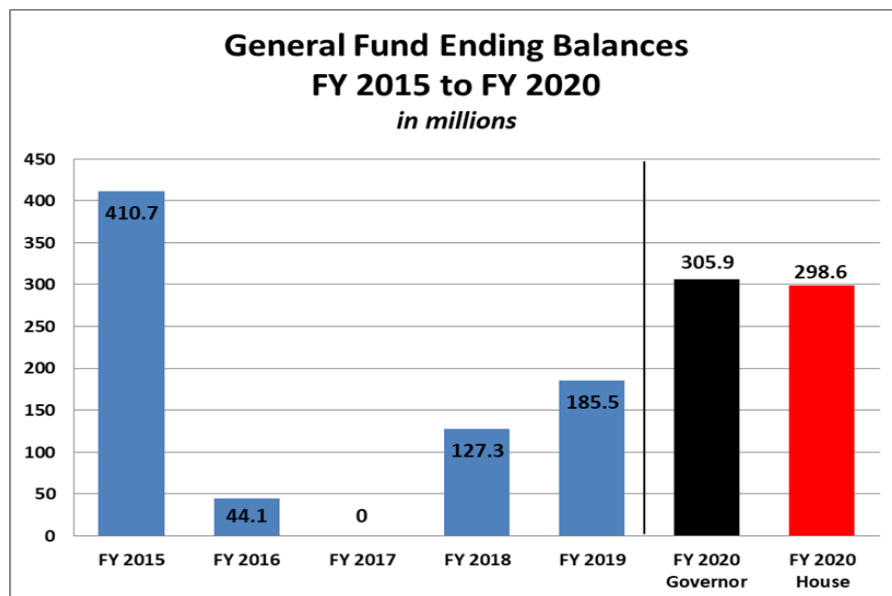
The House Republican targets are very close to what Governor Reynolds proposed in her Condition of the State speech last month. The House plan spends \$9.5 million more than what the

Governor recommended in her budget. Both plans spend below the limits imposed by Iowa's expenditure limitation law (\$7.8807 billion).



The targets fund House Republican priorities while limiting spending and increasing the state's ending balance. Under the House plan, the state ends Fiscal Year 2020 with a balance of \$298.6 million in the General Fund. This would be a significant

improvement from just a couple years ago and provides a cushion in case revenue estimates, on which all state spending is based, misses the mark.





Agriculture

(Contact Lew Olson at 1-3096)

New State Veterinarian for Iowa

On Wednesday, February 20, 2019, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) issued a press release in which Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig announced Dr. Jeff Kaisand as the new State Veterinarian within IDALS. As State Veterinarian, Dr. Kaisand will lead the Department's Animal Industry Bureau, which oversees regulation of animal movement, exhibitions, importation and disease eradication/control. The State Veterinarian also plays an important role in working with partners to prevent, prepare and respond to any foreign animal disease or natural disaster concern. The Bureau also regulates certain commercial companion animal breeders and retailers.

Dr. Kaisand served as Assistant State Veterinarian for six years and has been the Acting State Veterinarian since Dr. David Schmitt's retirement as State Veterinarian in January 2019. Dr. Kaisand was an integral part of the state's response to the Avian Influenza outbreak in 2015. Prior to joining IDALS, Dr. Kaisand held various veterinary supervisor roles with Iowa businesses and had his own veterinary practice. Dr. Kaisand earned his degree in veterinary medicine from Iowa State University. He also has a degree in animal science from Iowa State University.

Commerce

(Contact Bem Gemtz at 1-3452)

Commerce Committee Continues to Work

Funnel week is quickly approaching, several subcommittees are being held and bills are being considered and passed out of committee. This week the House Commerce Committee worked to move three bills out of committee and on to consideration by the entire House. These bills will have a positive impact on business in our state and many passed with bipartisan support.

HSB 105 - Sets parameters for out of state licensed or certified real estate appraisers to practice in Iowa. Without this legislation, there are no consequences for bad actors that come and practice in Iowa.

HF 225 - Increases demolition reserves for fire and casualty insurance to \$20,000 or 20% of damages payment. When an older building is significantly damaged in a fire or natural disaster the cost to repair can be greater than the insurance coverage. Some owners choose to take their insurance money and leave town, leaving communities with unsightly properties and excessive costs

to clean up the property.

HSB 32 - Management fees must be tied to direct and fully documented costs incurred to maintain public right of way. Requires cities to be able to prove the costs charged to utilities for using public right of ways, instead of arbitrarily picking a fee amount out of thin air.

In addition two Commerce Committee bills passed off the House floor this week.

HF 262 - Defines and prohibits the establishment, promotion, or operation of a pyramid promotional scheme. This protects consumers and provides for the prosecution of offenders under Iowa's consumer protection laws.

HF 264 - Iowa is a leader in the insurance industry. This bill establishes the process where an insurance company who may have merged can divide or split apart.

Economic Growth

(Contact Kristi Kious 2-5290)

House Economic Growth Passes Small Business Legislation

This week the House Economic Growth Committee passed two bills with bi-partisan support that will help Iowa's small businesses.

House Study Bill 152 supports our Targeted Small Businesses by making it easier for them to contract for direct purchases from the state. Targeted Small Businesses are generally those owned by women or minority residents of Iowa. Current law allowed the state to directly purchase (instead of use procurement procedures) from TSBs if the contract was under \$10,000. House Study Bill 152 will allow the state to directly purchase from a TSB if that purchase would comply with TSB procurement goals and the amount does not exceed \$250,000. The entire committee was supportive of helping the TSBs except for Rep. Hall of Woodbury.

Another bill that will potentially help small businesses is House

Study Bill 91. This bill allows an emergency project to be eligible for a grant from the Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program Fund. An emergency project is a remediation of an underutilized building that may present a unique and immediate opportunity, or a unique and immediate threat. This will be helpful to communities that are suddenly devastated by a tornado or flood and want to rebuild a business.

Both bills are now ready for consideration on the House floor and the House Economic Growth Committee will continue looking for ways to support Iowa's small business community.



Education

Contact Jason Chapman at 1-3015)

The SAVE Fund, Infrastructure Dollars, Property Tax Relief

Last week the House Education Committee approved a bill, on a bipartisan vote, extending the sunset date on the statewide penny sales tax that provides funding for school infrastructure. The fund, in which the penny is deposited, is called the SAVE (Secure an Advanced Vision for Education) fund.

This has been a priority for schools for several years now, making sure the dollars that are used by our schools to maintain and build safe, high-quality learning environments that keep pace with changes in technology and student needs.

The original intent of SAVE was to not only save property tax payers money by providing a steady stream of revenue for infrastructure that otherwise would have fallen on property taxes through general obligation bonds, but also to provide direct property tax relief by sending 2.1% of the SAVE dollars to lower the rates for property tax payers in low-property value districts. The bill took steps forward on this point by increasing the amount from 2.1% to 12%. The impact of this move will be an estimated \$2.4 billion in direct property tax relief over the next 30 years. Most of the aid will go to low-value, high-rate districts, but some will go to all districts across the state for relief.

The bill also created a Career Academy Fund which will provide dollars to districts through competitive grants to create regional

career academies meant to get high school students in the pipeline to high-quality, high-paying jobs through classes and experiences related to those careers.

New language this year that was not in last year's bill is intent language to provide some measures of security in school buildings. Before districts are allowed to use their funds for athletic facilities, the district must ensure that all school buildings are secured with locked entrances, cameras, and other security features.

Lastly, the bill also put some accountability on the use of SAVE funds. Both the building of athletic facilities and the district use of SAVE dollars to back bonding projects will see more transparency as the school board must adopt a resolution and hold a public hearing on these two uses of SAVE funds. Voters will then have the opportunity to petition and stop such projects if they choose.

The Senate is moving a similar bill, concurrently, which has passed their Education Committee as well. Next up for both chambers is action through the Ways and Means committees.

To view the SAVE annual report, visit the Department of Education's website here: <https://educateiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/FY18%20SAVE%20Legislative%20Report.pdf>

Iowa Teacher of the Year Nominations Due April 1

The Department of Education and the Governor are looking for nominations for 2020's Iowa Teacher of the Year award. The award provides an opportunity to recognize an Iowa teacher who motivates, challenges, and inspires excellence; who is respected by students and peers; who is a dedicated professional that helps nurture hidden talents and abilities; who is a creative, caring individual; who takes teaching beyond textbooks and blackboards; and who is an exceptional teacher helping to redefine American education.

Established in 1958, the annual program is sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education through an appropriation from the Iowa Legislature. The Teacher of the Year serves as an ambassador to education and as a liaison to primary and secondary schools, higher education and organizations across the state.

The legislative appropriation is \$85,000 in the Education Appropriations bill, part of the Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program, for the Ambassador to Education position.

Nominations can come from anyone, including students, parents, school administrators, colleagues, college faculty members and associations. Nomination forms can be found on the Iowa Department of Education's website: <https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/award-exchange-programs/iowa-teacher-year-toy>. They are due April 1, 2019.

The 2019 Teacher of the Year will be announced this fall.

Previous winners are:

- ◇ 2019 – Chris Burke – Math – Eleanor Roosevelt Middle School, Dubuque

- ◇ 2018 – Aileen Sullivan – Chemistry – Ames High School, Ames
- ◇ 2017 – Shelly Vroegh – 5th Grade – Lakewood Elementary School, Norwalk
- ◇ 2016 - Scott Slechta – English-language arts – Fairfield High School, Fairfield
- ◇ 2015 - Clemencia Spizzirri – Spanish – Merrill Middle School, Des Moines
- ◇ 2014 - Jane Schmidt - 8th Grade Literacy and Language Arts - Maquoketa Middle School, Maquoketa
- ◇ 2013 - Tania Johnson – Kindergarten – Jackson Elementary School, Cedar Rapids
- ◇ 2012 - Charity Campbell – Physical Education – Norwalk Middle School, Norwalk
- ◇ 2011 - Molly Boyle – 3rd Grade – Brookview Elementary School, West Des Moines (Waukee CSD)
- ◇ 2010 - Sarah Brown Wessling – High School English – Johnston High School, Johnston

A full list of winners dating back to 1958, and other details about the award, can be found on the Department's site: <https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/award-exchange-programs/iowa-teacher-year-toy>.



Environmental Protection

(Contact Lew Olson at 1-3096)

EPC Rejects Petition for Stricter Lake Water Quality Standards

On Tuesday, February 19, 2019, the Iowa Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) held its monthly meeting and took action to reject a petition for rule making that was filed by the Environmental Law & Policy Center and the Iowa Environmental Protection Council that petition for numeric standards applicable to 159 of Iowa recreational waters. The petition establishes standards for water transparency, concentration of chlorophyll-a, concentration of total phosphorus, and concentration of total nitrogen. The proposed rules also designate 159 lakes as "Significant Public Recreational Lakes" which would then subject these lakes to the proposed nutrient-related standards.

The premises that underlie the Petition can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Nutrient loading to Iowa surface waters are in excess of the ideal loadings;
- (b) Nutrient loading is related to impacts on recreational uses;
- (c) The State of Iowa has a legal duty to adopt numeric criteria for nitrogen and phosphorus;
- (d) Numeric nutrient criteria are necessary to the protection of Iowa lakes; and
- (e) The State of Iowa should adopt the specific numeric recreational criteria set.

The Iowa DNR agrees current nutrient loadings to Iowa waters, from both point and nonpoint sources, need to be reduced. The Iowa DNR is an ongoing partner with numerous state and federal partners, including governmental agencies, educational institutions, business associations, nongovernmental organizations, corporations, and private citizens, to address this significant issue. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being invested on an annual basis to reduce nutrient loads to Iowa surface waters. The Iowa DNR also acknowledges that nutrients have an impact on recreational uses of the State's waters. Iowa has been a leader in the collection of data needed to understand and address the occur-

rence of harmful algal blooms. That leadership has allowed Iowa to participate in current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) efforts to determine the role of nutrient loads on the occurrence of harmful algal blooms and the production of toxins. As further explained below, the Iowa DNR denies that either the Clean Water Act (CWA) or state law requires the adoption of numeric nutrient criteria. The Iowa DNR further asserts that the specific recreational numeric nutrient criteria proposed in the Petition are not required by law, not supported by science, not necessary to the protection of Iowa lakes, and not needed to restore and maintain the quality of those waters. The Iowa DNR asserts that the initiation of the proposed rulemaking will result in significant economic impacts to Iowans and risks the imposition of more stringent nutrient criteria by the EPA, the substance of which will be beyond the control of Iowa lawmakers.

Iowa has adopted narrative water quality standards that address conditions caused by excess nutrients. The CWA allows narrative water quality standards. See, *Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. v. U.S. EPA*, 16 F.3d 1395, 1404-1405 (1993). Iowa has satisfied its duties pursuant to 40 C.F.R. Part 131 to establish recreational designated uses and to establish criteria related to those uses. In rejecting the petition, it was noted that the move could cost Iowa cities and towns about \$205-million to meet the stricter standards. Jon Tack, DNR's Water quality Bureau chief observed that--"The breakdown per capita would be astronomical." For example, the improvement would cost \$41,822 per person in Corydon, a town of ~1,500 in southern Iowa. Advocate for the petition cited concerns about microcystins that can taint surface waters when blue-green algae blooms affect surface waters used for drinking water or recreational purposes. What wasn't discussed by the advocates of the petition is research that finds microcystin can be of concern in water with low nitrogen nutrient levels if there is sufficient phosphorous legacy levels in top levels of sediments of water that can support nitrogen fixing cyano-bacteria algae that can produce the microcystin and out-compete other algae in low nitrogen nutrient waters.

Human Resources

(Contact Natalie Ginty 5-2063)

Iowa's Critical Access Hospital Rank at the Top

Recently, the [Chartis Center for Rural Health](#) released the 2019 Top 100 Critical Access Hospitals in the country, and 15 Iowa Critical Access Hospitals made the list.

- Cherokee Regional Medical Center – House District 3
- CHI Health Mercy Corning – House District 21
- CHI Health Missouri Valley – House District 17
- Floyd Valley Hospital, Le Mars – House District 5
- Greater Regional Health Center, Creston – House District 21
- Henry County Health Center, Mount Pleasant – House District 84
- Humboldt County Memorial Hospital – House District 10
- Loring Hospital, Sac City – House District 11
- Mahaska Health, Oskaloosa – House District 79
- Mitchell County Regional Health, Osage – House District 51

- Montgomery County Memorial Hospital, Red Oak – House District 23
- Myrtue Medical Center, Harlan – House District 18
- Orange City Area Health System – House District 4
- Pella Regional Health Center – House District 79
- UnityPoint Health-Jones Regional Medical Center, Anamosa – House District 96

Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) are designated by CMS to hospitals in rural areas that have no more than 25 inpatient beds and are located more than 35 miles from another hospital. Iowa has 82 CAHs, with only Kansas having more with 83 CAHs.

In 2017, Iowa's CAHs had 42,065 admissions, 5,357 births, 357,375 emergency department visits and over 4 million total outpatient visits, according to the Iowa Hospital Association.

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These CAH rankings confirm the [U.S. News & World Report](#) last year that found Iowa as the #3 state overall in health care. The Report determined that ranking based on health care affordability, health care quality, insurance enrollment, health care access, child wellness visits, and infant mortality rates.

Even with these high health care ratings, House Republicans know that our work isn't complete. We will continue efforts to ensure Iowans in every part of the state have access to high quality, affordable health care. Overall budget targets were released this week by House Republicans. The targets provide enough flexibility for House Republicans to find additional resources for Critical Access Hospitals.

Natural Resources

Contact Natalie Ginty 5-2063)

DNR to Host Public Meetings Across State on Hunting

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources recently released the following press release:

The DNR is hosting a series of town hall-style meetings where local staff will provide updates on recently completed hunting seasons, discuss possible changes to hunting rules and regulations, and address other topics as requested.

"We want people to come out to these meetings, listen to the hunting seasons reviews, ask questions and hear directly from our staff," said Todd Bishop, chief of the Iowa DNR's Wildlife Bureau. "Part of the meeting will be devoted to discussing potential rule changes and collecting feedback as we work through the rules process."

The meetings are open to the public. Comments collected from these public meetings will be considered along with other related comments received by the Iowa DNR prior to proposing changes to hunting rules and regulations. Proposed rules will be presented to the Natural Resource Commission during a regular public meeting for consideration and additional public comment.

These meetings replace the one night listening session held in late winter over the past 15 years.

Meeting date, time and location

Bloomfield, Feb. 21, 7 p.m., Pioneer Ridge Nature Center, 1339 Hwy. 63

Chariton, Feb. 21, 7 p.m., Pin Oak Lodge, 45996 Hwy. 14

Creston, Feb. 21, 7 p.m., Multi-Purpose Room adjacent to the YMCA, Southwestern Community College

Algona, Feb. 25, 7 p.m., Waters Edge Nature Center, 1010 250th Street

Waverly, Feb. 25, 7 p.m., Waverly Public Library, 1500 W Bremer Avenue

Sac City, Feb. 26, 7 p.m., Sac County Conservation Center at Hagge Park, 2970 280th Street

Council Bluffs, Feb. 26, 7 p.m., Fish and Game Club, 531 Commanche Street

Okoboji, Feb. 26, 6:30 p.m., Dickinson County Nature Center, 22785 Nature Center Road

Des Moines, Feb. 26, 7 p.m., Des Moines Izaak Walton League, 4343 George Flagg Pkwy

Jefferson, Feb. 27, 7 p.m., The Jefferson Depot, 509 East Lincoln Way

Iowa City, Feb. 27, 7 p.m., ISU Extension Office, 3109 Old Hwy. 218 South

DeWitt, Feb. 28, 7 p.m., DeWitt Community Center, 512 10th Street

Salix, Feb. 28, 7 p.m., Lakeport Gun Club, 3089 Calhoun Avenue

Toledo, March 7, 7 p.m., Tama County Nature Center, Otter Creek Lake Park, 2283 Park Road

Decorah, March 7, 7 p.m., Decorah City Hall, 400 Clairborne Drive

Public Safety

(Contact Amanda Wille at 1-5230)

Firearms Legislation in the House

Various firearms bills have been proposed this year, some to strengthen Iowans freedoms, some to take them away. It's easy to lose track of the bills with funnel quickly approaching. Below are several bills being under consideration in the House.

House Joint Resolution 3- Freedom Amendment

House Joint Resolution 3 adds firearms rights to the Iowa Constitution. The Federal Constitution has the 2nd Amendment (A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.), but Iowa's Constitution is silent on this right. The proposed language recognizes the right of the people to keep and bear arms and subject any infringement on this right to a strict scrutiny review by the Courts. This amendment does not invalidate any current firearms laws, but instead preserves the right for law abiding Iowans to keep and bear arms, even if there are challenges in the federal courts.

This bill has passed subcommittee in House Public Safety by a

vote of (2-1)

House File 259- Family Defense Act

HF259 makes changes to the laws regarding where a person can carry their legally owned firearm. There are four separate changes addressed in the bill. First, a person, with a valid permit to carry, who has passed all necessary background checks, may bring their legal firearm on limited areas of school property. This includes the driveway, parking lot or sidewalk of a school. The second portion of the bill allows a person who legally possesses firearms to leave the firearm in their vehicle at work as long it is securely locked in their vehicle. This bill does not allow an employee to carry while at work if their employer prohibits firearms on the premises. The third part of this bill applies firearms laws equally across the state and prevents cities and other municipalities from enacting ordinances that differ from the state.

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This prevents legal confusion for law enforcement officers and legal gun owners. Language in HF 259 also protects concert goers by ensuring political subdivisions who own or operate entertainment venues provide armed security and metal detectors for all attendees if firearms are not allowed on the property. The fourth and final part of the bill limits where firearms can be in a court house. Firearms would be banned in courtrooms controlled by the Judicial Branch. HF259 is scheduled for a subcommittee this week

House File 385- Constitutional Carry

HF385 requires federally licensed firearms dealers to use the National Instant Criminal Background Checks when selling firearms unless the buyer has an optional permit to purchase or carry a weapon. If a person is prohibited from legally purchasing a firearm they can be charged with an aggravated misdemeanor. A person who privately sells a firearm must also ensure the purchaser has passed a background check with NICS. Selling a firearm to a prohibited person is a class "D" felony. HF 385 also increases penalties on people who give a false name or information in order to illegally obtain a firearm. In this case, the penalty is being raised from a class "D" to a class "C" felony and the person could spend up to 10 years in prison.

State Government

(Contact Logan Murray 1-3626)

Congressional Democrats Plan to Overturn Nonpartisan Redistricting in Iowa

The first Resolution that Congressional Democrats introduced after taking control in January fundamentally changes the fair and non-partisan redistricting model that Iowa has used for nearly 40 years to draw congressional district lines. This new commission injects politics into redistricting by requiring that members of the commission be registered with a political party. The bill requires 5 members to be from the controlling political party in the state, 5 members from the minority political party in the state, and 5 members that are political independents. The resolution also allows members of the commission to donate an aggregate of \$20,000 to candidates for all political offices during the "covered period" of the bill.

The criteria that the Commission is required to follow under HR 1 includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Districts shall provide racial, ethnic, and language minorities with an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and to elect candidates of choice and shall not dilute or diminish their ability to elect candidates of choice whether alone or in coalition with others.
- Districts shall minimize the division of communities of interest, neighborhoods, and political subdivisions to the extent practicable. A community of interest is defined as an area with recognized similarities of interests, including but not limited to ethnic, economic, social, cultural, geographic or historic identities. The term communities of interest may, in circumstances, include political subdivisions such as counties, municipalities, or school districts, but shall not include common relationships with political parties, officeholders, or political candidates.
- The redistricting plan developed by the independent redistricting commission shall not, when considered on a Statewide basis, unduly favor or disfavor any political party.

Iowa's current fair and nonpartisan redistricting process has been in place since for nearly 40 years. The Iowa Legislature enacted a nonpartisan redistricting method for drawing congressional and

legislative boundaries in 1980. The Legislature felt that it was important to take politics out of redistricting and put the Legislative Service Agency (LSA) in charge of drawing the map. LSA is solely responsible for preparing each proposed redistricting plan. LSA shall have no interaction or involvement with the Temporary Redistricting Advisory Commission, legislators, or any outside interest while plans are developed and selected. Since it was enacted the Iowa Legislature has always accepted the maps drawn up by the LSA. The criteria that LSA follows can be found in IA Code Ch. 42. A few of the highlights include:

- Nearly equal as practicable to the ideal population for the district.
- Counties should not be split amongst Congressional district and larger political subdivisions should be split before smaller ones.
- The districts should be compact.
- The purpose shall not be to favor one political party or incumbent legislature.

House Resolution 1 in Congress needlessly injects politics into Iowa's redistricting system. There's no reason to change a process in Iowa that is respected throughout the country and is working well. The plan by Congressional Democrats to politicize Iowa's redistricting system is bad news for Iowans. Iowa's current process is designed to minimize partisan politics. But that's apparently not good enough for Democrat politicians.

The Iowa redistricting process is a model example for how states can avoid the partisan political battles that are so prevalent in Washington, D.C. Corruption, gerrymandering and other issues may be problems in other states, but they are not issues in Iowa. Nor should Congressional Democrats be permitted to inject politics into an already nonpartisan redistricting process.



Transportation

(Contact Bem Gemtz at 1-3452)

Iowa's Long-Range Transportation Plan

Government agencies are well known for developing plans. But a plan is only as impactful as its implementation. At the Iowa Department of Transportation, an [award-winning planning team](#) works diligently to analyze data, review public input, and create plans that come to life to keep people and goods moving safely and efficiently through our state.

The Iowa DOT's long-range transportation plan, [Iowa in Motion 2045](#), addresses federal requirements and serves as a transportation investment guide. Getting the most out of every tax dollar and providing a safe, reliable transportation system well into the future are critical elements for economic development and job creation throughout the state.

The plan, updated every five years, takes into account all transportation modes and has a strong emphasis on stewardship. The prior state transportation plan, adopted in 2012, focused on policy issues and not on specific, actionable items. The goal with the most recent plan was to provide specific strategies and improvement needs that can be implemented and revisited over time.

The plan includes the following.

- **Trends:** An analysis of demographic, economic, passenger, and freight trends, and what these trends mean for Iowa's transportation system.
- **System condition:** An overview of each mode within the transportation system.
- **Vision:** Broad statement that captures the overall vision for Iowa's future transportation system.
- **Investment areas:** Overarching areas within which actions have been defined to implement the system vision.
- **Strategies and improvement needs:** Actionable information that will be utilized to implement the vision.
- **Costs and revenues:** An analysis of anticipated costs and revenues for each transportation mode.

Implementation: A discussion related to addressing funding needs, programming future investments, and continuous performance monitoring.

Changing from a policy document to a plan containing actionable items means it will be easier to recognize real, tangible changes because of the work that is being done on the plan. Let's take a look at three specific applications related to how we do business that support the implementation of the plan and how they impact the way people and goods move around and through our state.

Project prioritization and scoping tool

It's a fact of life that there are more needs on the transportation system than funds to address them. To get the most out of every dollar, we need to devote resources to the projects that are deemed the most critical to maintaining the transportation system as a whole.

The long-range plan identified needs on the Primary Highway System across several categories, including capacity, mobility and safety, freight, pavement and bridge condition, and operations. These needs have been incorporated into the scoping tool, so project sponsors know if their study area has been singled out for one or more of these categories and can consider the plan's analysis in defining their project. This also helps ensure projects that move forward are consistent with the long-range plan.

Super 2 highway design

A second practical application to come out of the long-range plan involves design ideas to keep people moving using a "Super 2" highway. The premise for a "Super 2" highway is fairly straightforward. It is a two-lane highway with improvements to help improve mobility and safety. Design elements can include added lanes for passing, climbing or turning; wider paved shoulders; limited access; and other roadway design improvements.

What a 'Super 2' highway provides is an added passing lane at certain intervals on a rural two-lane roadway. This design option allows faster moving vehicles to pass slower moving vehicles and farm equipment without passing into oncoming traffic, improving both safety and mobility. It is more cost-effective than building a four-lane highway but provides many of the benefits.

Complete Streets policy

A lot of us love our cars, but we don't spend 100 percent of our travel time inside a vehicle. Biking and walking are forms of transportation that must be included in any holistic plan, as they are modes of transportation in their own right, and often the start and end of vehicular trips.

Collaboration is the key to a plan that works

Using a mountain of data and analysis, Iowa in Motion 2045 shines a light to guide future transportation investments. This plan was made possible because of the input of many individuals and groups of people from both within and outside of the Iowa DOT.

But we're not done. While the next update to the long-range plan won't be completed until 2022, development of it will start soon. In the meantime, the analysis and strategies outlined in the current plan will continue to be used and refined to provide the best possible overall transportation system.



Veterans Affairs

(Contact Ashley Beall 1-3440)

VA's Appeals Modernization Act Takes Effect This Week

Earlier this week the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it has implemented the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, which was signed into law August 23, 2017, and represents one of the most significant statutory changes to benefit Veterans in decades.

Effective today, Veterans who appeal a VA claims decision have three decision review options:

High-Level Review, Supplemental Claim, and Appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals

- In the Higher-level Review Option, a more experienced adjudicator will conduct a new review of the previous decision
- Veterans who selected the Supplemental Claim option may submit new and relevant evidence, and VA will assist in developing new evidence under its duty to assist
- If Veterans appeal to the Board, they can choose one of three dockets: direct review, evidence or hearing.

The VA's goal is to complete Supplemental Claims and Higher-

Level Reviews in an average of 125 days, and decisions appealed to the Board for direct review in an average of 365 days. Under the legacy process, decisions averaged three to seven years.

The VA's fiscal year 2019 budget included funding for 605 additional appeals employees, which VA used to establish two new Decision Review Operations Centers at the St. Petersburg, Florida, and Seattle, Washington, regional offices. The former Appeals Resource Center in Washington, D.C., was converted to a third Decision Review Operations Center.

For more than 18 months, VA has worked toward full implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act, but reform has been a goal for VA and its stakeholders for years. In March 2016, VA sponsored an "Appeals Summit" in which VA, Veterans Service Organizations, Veterans advocates and Congress worked together to design a new appeals system. The summit resulted in the drafting, passage and implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.

Ways & Means

(Contact Kristi Kious at 2-5290)

Regenerative Medicine Tax Credit Passes Subcommittee

I am sure we all have our tax returns filed and are looking forward to getting our refunds! Well, even if you have not quite filed or even started your return—you are at least excited at the prospect of a refund. The easiest way to track your refunds are the Where's My Refund? tools at the state and federal level. Both will save you time and frustration on the phone.

The IRS tool is available on IRS.gov and through the IRS2Go app. The state tool is on the Iowa Department of Revenue website. Remember that taxpayers claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit or

the Additional Child Tax Credit will not see their refunds until after February 27th because federal law requires them to be held until mid-February for security checks. Because of the flow through from federal to state—this will also result in delayed state refunds.

Various things can delay return processing. A few examples are mailing a paper return, not choosing direct deposit, having errors on a return, missing documentation, and returns identified for additional review. April 15 will be here before we know it!